California Community Colleges

Academic Senate
for California Community Colleges
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FAQ on AB 705

How do the goals of AB 705 interface with efforts already underway to achieve the outcomes delineated in the Chancellor's Vision for Success?

The following outcomes are consistent with both efforts to improve student success:

- Increase the numbers of students who enter and complete transfer-level English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning in one year.
- Minimize the disproportionate impact on students created through inaccurate placement processes.
- Increase the number of students completing transfer-level English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning within three years.

What does it mean to maximize the probability of completion of transfer-level math and English in one year?

That means that colleges need to put structures in place that ensure that students can engage a curriculum that supports completion of transfer-level English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning in two semesters (or three quarters as applicable). New placement policies will place a majority of students directly into transfer-level courses, but any students who are not must have access to curriculum that allows them to complete transfer level in two semesters (or three quarters as applicable).

Can we place students one-level below transfer-level?

Yes, colleges may determine the best placement for some students is one-level below transfer. However, this should be a significantly smaller proportion than is currently directed toward pre-transfer courses. The work ahead involves providing a rationale and evidence for placement decisions. The law strictly prohibits placing students into pre-transfer levels unless both conditions are met: the students are highly unlikely to succeed in the transfer course AND enrolling in the pre-transfer course will increase the likelihood of success in the transfer-level course. Both conditions must be met in order to place students one level below. Colleges who determine that this placement is necessary will be required to validate that choice statistically using data from the next two years of experimentation. Validation protocols will be published shortly.

Colleges should critically analyze the purpose of and additional time and units that prerequisites require of students. As already required in title 5, prerequisites must be validated to prove they enhance success. AB 705 places a time limit on any English and math prerequisites that may lengthen students' time to accessing

transfer level English, math, and quantitative reasoning courses. If the college can establish that the prerequisite is warranted – that it has significant impact on the students' likelihood of success – then that prerequisite course's value with respect to increasing success would permit the course to be required. In other words, the increased likelihood of success in the transfer-level course would justify the placement in a pre-transfer course. As with any prerequisite course, there must be a process by which the student may challenge the prerequisite.

AB 705 is an opportunity to rethink the ways that students can be most successful. Colleges should locally evaluate their current placement practices, examine the default placement rules, conduct research, and design protocols that maximize student success. Maintaining the status quo will not meet the requirements of the law or the needs of students.

Can we and should we keep offering courses below transfer-level?

Colleges can continue to offer courses below transfer. These courses may be part of plans to serve various aspects of the college community. However, colleges cannot require students to enroll unless the students are highly unlikely to succeed in the transfer course AND enrolling in the pre-transfer course will increase the likelihood of success in the transfer-level course. Both conditions must be met in order to place students one level below. That is the reason that many more students are likely to be directly placed into transfer-level English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning under AB 705. As with all course offerings from a college, institutions should evaluate the intention and value of curricular offerings as aligned with their mission and community needs.

What is the purpose of the default placement rules delineated in the July 10, 2018 memo regarding Assembly Bill (AB) 705 Implementation?

The default placement rules provide colleges with a prescribed statistical approach to comply with AB 705. A college may implement an alternative placement approach that results in a greater likelihood of completing transfer-level course work than the default rules. If the default placement rules are not employed, local practices must be evaluated and must employ multiple measures and disjunctive placement models that include high school transcript data, as appropriate.

Can colleges develop and adopt their own placement rules that place students into pre-transfer-level coursework?

Yes, colleges can develop and adopt their own placement rules that place students into pre-transfer-level coursework**,** but colleges must show success equal or surpassing direct placement into a transfer-level course within the 2-year data collection period. Students may be placed into such courses if it can be demonstrated that those students are highly unlikely to succeed in transfer-level if placed there directly.

If the default placement rules are implemented, does the college have to validate the effectiveness of its recommended placement?

No, not for the purposes of compliance with just AB705. However, as a matter of good practice, colleges should periodically evaluate the effectiveness of their placement recommendations to students. Assuring the effectiveness of both placement policies and curricula is an ongoing effort. All colleges are expected to report the outcomes of their choices to the Chancellor's Office whether the default placement rules are implemented or some other design is developed.

What is the purpose of the default placement rules where success for the lowest node is so low?

The default placement rules offer a scheme for placing students into courses based on high school grade point average (GPA). Consistent with ensuring student access to transfer-level coursework, it indicates placement into transfer-level coursework even when the chances of success are less than 30% because the throughput is expected to be greater than placing the student in pre-transfer level work based on the MMAP study of state-level data. Because the success rate numbers for the lowest node are low, colleges should evaluate if there may be better curricular, co-curricular, and non-curricular innovations that would better serve students in order to improve throughput to transfer-level completion.

The BSTEM (business, science, technology, engineering, and math) table presumes student completion of Intermediate Algebra/Algebra 2, an equivalent such as Integrated Math III, or a higher course in high school.

If we choose not to use the default placement rules, and we create new developmental courses, do we have two years to collect data to show that our placement rules and courses meet or exceed the results from the default placement rules?

Yes, colleges that choose not to adopt the default placement rules may create new placement and curricular structures intended to maximize student completion; however, they should not be required for students unless the college can demonstrate that they would be highly unlikely to succeed AND enrolling in the pre-transfer course will increase the likelihood of success in the transfer course. During the two-year data collection period, colleges will study placement and curriculum protocols in order to demonstrate whether or not those policies meet or exceed the throughput rates compared to direct placement. When validating, each "node" based on high school performance will need to be compared and validated. Validation protocols will be forthcoming.

When collecting local data to compare to the default placement rules, what is the aggregate success rate that we should compare to?

Colleges are not aggregating course success rates for their validation. Instead, they are working to improve throughput rates, which are represented in the guidance memo charts by high school performance "nodes." The intent of the legislation is to maximize "throughput" to transfer-level courses, so colleges need to use the MMAP charts to demonstrate within two years that their local practices meet or exceed the throughput rates for students within each node, or simply adopt the default placement rules in order to validate local decision-making.

Can we require students to take corequisite courses?

Yes, co-requisite requirements are already allowed, and the Programs and Course Approval Handbook already addresses the conditions under which they can be required. Essentially, a co-requisite puts a limitation on enrollment, and so within the two-year validation period, colleges will need to demonstrate that the required co-requisite improved the likelihood of success in the transfer-level course. The memo makes recommendations because it is a guidance communication, not regulatory language. Colleges may require co-requisites to transfer-level English or mathematics/quantitative reasoning courses. As with any corequisite course, there must be a process by which the student may challenge the corequisite.

Colleges should critically analyze the purpose of and additional time and units that corequisites require of students. As already required in Title 5, corequisites must be validated to prove they enhance success. AB 705 cautions that excessive unit requirements are a barrier to success but also reinforces co-requisites as a supportable method of accelerating skills development. As with any corequisite course, there must be a process by which the student may challenge the corequisite.

Why does the guidance memo from July 10, 2018 reference concurrent support as "recommended" or "strongly recommended" and not "required" if colleges can require it for students?

The memo urges colleges to consider the inclusion of concurrent support for students within specific bands with specific background indicators based on high school performance. The recommendation language was directed at the colleges, not at students.

Can a college require a noncredit support course?

Yes, colleges may require a noncredit support course or other innovation within noncredit. This support should be evaluated and, if required, is considered part of the two semesters or three quarters allotted for completion of the transfer-level course. It is also important to evaluate the number of hours the student is expected to complete per week in the noncredit support course and if that time places an undue burden on the student.

Can colleges continue to offer existing curricular sequences and placement practices and study them for the next two years?

No. AB 705 requires that all of the California community colleges adhere to the principles of the law. By the fall of 2019, colleges must re-engineer their local assessment practices to utilize high school performance as the primary vehicle for placement recommendations and discontinue the use of standardized placement tests. The Board of Governors must approve placement instruments, and they have not approved any for English or for math; however, they may for ESL. Colleges must also follow the two central conditions of the legislation:

1. Students cannot be placed into pre-transfer courses unless the college can demonstrate that they are highly unlikely to succeed in them
2. Enrollment in a pre-transfer course must improve the students' likelihood of success in the transfer course.

When comparing the likelihood of success, colleges are encouraged to look at the differences between pre-transfer requirements and throughput and direct placement into the transfer course. Unless colleges adopt the default placement rules, they will need to validate local practices and demonstrate that they meet the standards of the law described above.

How is "highly unlikely to succeed" defined?

While this phrase is not defined in statute or the memo, an analysis of the stated intent of the legislation and of the approach used to determine the default placement rules suggests that compliance would be achieved if the student's chances of success are higher when he or she is placed into pre-transfer coursework or transfer-level work with support as compared to his or her chances of success with direct placement into a transfer-

level course. It should be noted that the placement must not result in the student being required to spend more than two semesters or three quarters to complete the transfer-level work.

Does AB705 only apply to transfer student?

No, AB 705 is applicable to all students who are seeking to complete a degree. While all students need a transfer level English composition course for degree completion, math requirements vary. Placement in math should align with the student's educational goal. If a student declares a major or goal that requires transfer-level math or quantitative reasoning, then the student should be placed in the correct math and at the correct level. If a student declares a major or goal that includes a local degree or certificate, then the student should be placed in the math or quantitative reasoning that matches the student's goal.

Do students have the right to challenge their placement into a pre-transfer course?

Yes. Students already have this right to challenge. If the college cannot illustrate that the conditions above are met, then students cannot be placed into pre-transfer courses. Colleges are encouraged to publicize their implementation to both current and prospective students. Increasingly, students will be insisting on their rights to transfer-level courses, and colleges must be prepared to respond appropriately.

What consequences, if any, are associated with not complying with AB 705?

Eligibility for both AB 19 (College Promise, formerly BOG waiver) and guided pathways funding are contingent upon compliance with AB 705. But even more urgent, the consequences of not reforming our efforts results in a disservice to our students.

Can we continue to offer our summer bridge course that serves as a review of basic skills and college success strategies? Does that course start the two-semester clock?

Yes, colleges may continue to offer summer bridge experiences, workshops, or courses that may cover, as part of their curriculum, some review of basic skills. This course will not start the clock as long as it is not required as part of the sequence to college level English or mathematics/quantitative reasoning.

Can placement tests be used as a tool to help students evaluate the best placement for themselves?

No, for English and mathematics/quantitative reasoning at this time all placement tests must be approved by the Board of Governors, which also includes "surveys" or "questionnaires" if they are being used as placement instruments. The Board of Governors has declined to approve any standardized placement tests beyond Fall 2019 for English or mathematics/quantitative reasoning. This does not apply to ESL, but the Board of Governors has not yet approved an instrument for ESL.